IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the abstract with:

The present invention relies on the idea of a meaning-based search, allowing users to locate information that is close in meaning to the concepts they are searching. A semantic space is created by a lexicon of concepts and relations between concepts. A query is mapped to a first meaning differentiator, representing the location of the query in the semantic space. Similarly, each data element in the target data set being searched is mapped to a second meaning differentiator, representing the location of the data element in the semantic space. Searching is accomplished by determining a semantic distance between the first and second meaning differentiator, wherein this distance represents their closeness in meaning. Search results on the input query are presented where the target data elements that are closest in meaning, based on their determined semantic distance, are ranked higher.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8-11, 16, 17, and 19-21.

Claims 1, 4, 7, 14, 18 and 22-23 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A method comprising:

organizing concepts according to their meaning into a lexicon, said lexicon defining elements of a semantic space;

specifying relationships between concepts; and

determining a semantic distance from a first concept to a second concept, said semantic distance representing closeness in meaning between said first concept and said second concept, wherein said semantic distance is calculated by evaluating steps along a semantic path between said first concept and said second concept and applying a dynamic scaling factor to a perceived distance of each step along the semantic path according to types of relationships followed, directionality of the relationships and changes in direction along the semantic path, and number of competing relationships followed at each step.

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